**Literacy in Science, Social Studies and Technical Subjects**

**Three Big Shifts**

The Common Core writers make clear that if teachers read the standards and teach them in isolation then they are missing the bigger points. For students to meet the performance levels described in the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards instruction needs to shift in three essential ways:  
  
**Shift 1: Building content knowledge and understanding through rich non-fiction texts.**  
  
The Common Core Standards were created with significant input from disciplinary professionals from the social studies, science and technical fields. These groups helped the writers determine exactly what type of reading and writing is required to participate in these areas of study and work.   
  
The Literacy Standards for Science, Social Studies, and Technical Subjects are not generic Reading across the Curriculum Standards as seen in GPS. Instead, they define exactly how students are expected to approach complex disciplinary texts in the relevant subjects. In social studies, what does it mean to read a primary or social studies text? What should the reader be looking for?  What must he/she know before, during, and after reading in order to fully grasp the meaning and intent of these texts? Like the English Language Arts standards, they are all aligned with a College and Career Ready anchor standard.   
  
Similarly, it is understood that students don’t just learn science, they *do* science. However, most scientists spend about 50% of their time reading. Mastery of science grows from reading *and* doing. Thus, students are expected to read and write about major ideas of science and results from experiments with an emphasis on synthesizing information from a variety of texts.   
  
The emphasis on informational texts is due to the reality that 80% of reading done in the workplace and college is informational.   
  
**Shift 2: Reading, writing, and listening grounded in evidence from the text.**   
  
The writers of the standards believe that “good writing comes from good reading.”  Subsequently, for students to create intelligent, coherent, and sophisticated responses to texts, they must learn how to read closely, with a sharp focus on exactly what the text says and does not say. As students read primary and secondary sources, scientific articles, and technical documents, they must learn to respond with precision in their arguments or informative responses.  
  
For example, if students are to meet the standards with James Madison’s Federalist Papers # 15 they would need to determine what he is saying explicitly and what is implicit. What is unsaid that is critical to understanding his view of factions?  According to the standards, simply referring to the text is not sufficient. Students must demonstrate command of the text by being able to discuss the various sides of the issues at hand. They must then synthesize their knowledge into clear and intelligent writing.    
  
**Regular practice with complex-text and its academic vocabulary.**  
  
According to ACT’s study, “Reading between the Lines,” twenty-five percent of graduates are prepared for the rigor of college and careers upon completion of high-school. Additionally, the key differentiator between those who are prepared and those who are not is their ability to handle complex-texts.   
  
For a deeper discussion of text-complexity see the module, “Text Complexity and Non-Fiction Text” by Gerald Boyd.   
  
  
ACT. (2006). *Reading between the line: what the act reveals about college readiness and reading*. Retrieved from http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/reading\_report.pdf  
  
Coleman, D. (Writer) (2011). *Ccsso* [Web]. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital_Resources/Common_Core_Implementation_Video_Series.html>